

Local contracting business on solid ground



Terrafirma staff: Tighe Lefebvre, Paul Griffiths, Norm Bruneau, Rob Allen is in front. Kent Changfoot is in back at far right.

Tighe Lefebvre takes pride in turning houses into homes for his customers. Now, after relocating to Maple Ridge, the carpenter and contractor has been getting the chance to impress his toughest critic – himself.

Lately, he's been hard at work taking an original west-side 1940s mill manager's home and transforming it into his dream residence and base for his nine-year-old contracting company, Terrafirma Industries.

"It's great. We found old boxes and even some old notes in the walls," he says. "It's a challenge making sure things are to code and keeping the style and feel of the place. The good thing is, if I want to put something I really want in, I can do it."

That's what happens when you own the company. But it wasn't always that way.

Lefebvre says he fell into the business in the mid-1990s. After spending some time traveling, he got a job with a local contracting firm based in Maple Ridge, did a four year apprenticeship program at BCIT, then obtained his Canadian Red Seal carpenter certification, and in 2003, started his own company.

"Things just kind of snowballed from there," he says.

His renovation and contracting company, Terrafirma Industries, which does everything from small repairs to major renos, now boasts two crews, a couple of trucks, four full-time employees, and a lot of word of mouth praise.

"We are really busy and it's mostly word of mouth," he says. "I guess we're doing something right."

Despite his levity, Lefebvre says that trust is one of the most important elements to a

relationship between a contractor and his client. Trust breeds loyal customers and keeps that positive word of mouth buzz happening. People are very wary of contractors and horror stories get around almost as fast. He insists it's important for people to do some ground work and check out a company's record.

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He is just finishing a job in which he's come in to fix up the mistakes of a bad contractor for a Langley woman. "It's really sad," he says. "Make calls. Talk to the Better Business Bureau."

Kitchens remain the most



popular spot to renovate, said Lefebvre, since work done in that part of the house adds value to a home. But sometimes people need a little help.

Through the years, he's built a network of subcontractors he is familiar with and can rely on. Lefebvre says the popularity of design shows have been a boom to his business and given customers some welcome ideas. He also works with a Maple Ridge design consultant, who helps customers with plans.

"Designers can help give people directions and focus," he says. "They can make all the difference."

So can he. Lefebvre seems particularly proud of the fact he's been able to help his employees gain the skills and credentials that he worked hard to get in the 1990s. He currently has an apprentice on staff and says he's managed to "put two guys through the BCIT program and they're still with me. It's great."

And while his crews continue to work at growing his business throughout the region, he's still pretty happy with the job he's done on his own reno job and with the community he now calls home.

"I love it here."

Tighe Lefebvre, owner

Five tips for choosing a contractor, from Tighe Lefebvre:

- 1 Go to the Better Business Bureau and check out the company.
- 2 Ask to make sure the company has WorkSafeBC insurance coverage.
- 3 Make sure you have someone who will communicate well with you.
- 4 Ask for references.
- 5 Make sure you do your due diligence and ask as many questions as possible.



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